

# Water the Roots 3

# Manage the Mind

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*The Second Generation*



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

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Man today is sick because he thinks he is sick. Sickness and disease have no place in the life of a person who does not accept and tolerate the self-limiting thoughts, which are the real seeds of our myriad ailments. We stand hypnotized by the belief that disease and illness are our fate rather than health and bliss, which are our birthright and heritage. In order to emerge from our mass hypnosis and collective hysteria and to experience health, joy and creative fulfilment, we must systematically apply yoga in our daily lives.

Today, as we enter the twenty-first century, a spiritual heritage is being reclaimed of which yoga is very much a part. While yoga's central theme remains the highest goal of the spiritual path, yogic practices give direct and tangible benefits to everyone regardless of their spiritual aims.

Beyond the needs of individuals, the underlying principles of yoga provide a real tool to combat social malaise. At a time when the world seems to be at a loss, rejecting past values without being able to establish new ones, yoga provides a means for people to find their own way of connecting with their true selves. Through this connection with their real selves it is possible for people to manifest harmony in the current age, and for compassion to emerge where until now there has been none.

In this respect, yoga is far from simply being physical exercises. Rather it is an aid to establish a new way of life which embraces both inner and outer realities.

In the twenty-first century we remain extroverted the whole day. We find little time to look within, which is most essential. Even when busiest, we find time to nurse the physical body. In the same manner, your inner self also requires a few minutes of attention daily. If the physical body requires evacuation, a



wash, a refill and garments to wear, doesn't your mental body need something too? Your mind, without a moment's rest, is facing the stress and strain of life. Therefore, it needs careful tending. Even machines are put to rest after a certain number of hours of work.

On the level of the body, it is clear that good health can be kept up by good discipline. The tragedy of all of us is that, having attained the miraculous self-sustaining system of the human body, we choose to take it for granted. We think that as long as it runs smoothly it is not our responsibility to maintain its machinery.

However, the errors in man's personality go on multiplying in the process of living. Rectification of these errors can only be brought about if one addresses oneself to the task of understanding one's own mental structure. The yogic methods of relaxation and revitalization ease the effects of ongoing tensions on the nerves. The accumulation of thought-waste can be brushed away by the process of yoga.

Depth-psychology has shown that there is a form of psychic determinism which controls our thoughts, actions and words. In fact, the revolution in modern psychological thought has led us to the conclusion that our conscious self is just a pygmy before the giant of the unconscious. The same truth was announced by the saints and seers of India as an intuitive truth, if not as a scientific maxim.

There is one simple thing that everyone in the world should know: man is more than he appears to be! In every human being there is a state of consciousness, a dimension of personality which is tenable, powerful, creative, and which is beyond pain.

We have lived dominated by the body, and we continue to identify with the body – that is the tragedy of our life. We have a mind but we don't know it. We have a bomb ready to explode, we have the treasure of the three worlds underneath us, and we don't know it.

Yoga is a scientific system by which human beings are able to transform their state of consciousness. The same mind which suffers from pain is also capable of experiencing pleasure.

Happiness and misery are both expressions of the human mind in different states. So instead of fighting with the pain, instead of kicking the shadow, why not bring in the light? Unless you are able to handle the mind, you can't handle God.

The rishis or seers of India realized the relationship between the mind and life. Life influences the mind, and the mind influences life. Of course, you can't control life – it is just not possible, but with the help of yoga and meditation you can manage the mind. If you can manage the mind, you are a yogi.

### **Befriend the mind**

The mind is your friend when it is under control. When the mind is not under control, it is your worst enemy. The mind is the cause of both bondage and freedom. The mind plays havoc, advances lame excuses and creates many obstacles. You have to tackle the mind tactfully. You should know the totality of the mind – the vrittis, sankalpas, passions, karmas, influences, innate desires and instincts. You should know everything. If you want to change the nature of the mind, you must have total knowledge of the mind. Once you know the mind, you will know how to serve it for the mind is not your enemy, it is your friend. Just as a horse that is out of control will overturn the cart, so the mind is an enemy when it is not under control.

Therefore, you have been trying to control anger, passions and jealousies, but nothing happens, because you are not dealing with the mind. You are dealing with the modifications of the mind. For many centuries you have been hearing from the wise that you should change the mind, but you have failed every time you tried to change it, because you have been trying to change the behaviour of the mind and not the nature of the mind. In order to know the mind you have to walk the path of yogic meditation. The very act of trying to overcome the limitations of the mind is an expression of yoga.

In the Bible it says, "Be like a child." It means be thoughtless, desireless and free of everything. Whether it is frustration or depression, death or birth, profit or loss, victory or

conquest, it is all a drama, a game. It is not reality. With a free mind you can maintain that childlike awareness all the time.

Making the mind free is difficult to explain. The mind is always engaged on the sensory, mental, emotional or deeper planes and often you do not know what holds your mind. When the mind becomes free from these involvements, it expresses itself as a powerful force in the form of experience, vision, light or revelation. The mind is a powerful tool in your hands for transcending your own limitations. If you cannot change the quality of your mind, you can never experience happiness. Happiness is not the quality of the world, it is the quality of your mind.

## TOOLS TO MANAGE THE MIND

There are many tools, practices and methods to manage the mind, to control our reactions, to become aware of our thoughts, behaviour and expression in life. Ultimately, we need to learn to come closer to our aim of finding balance and harmony in life.

### **Antar mouna**

The Sanskrit word *mouna* means 'silence', and *antar* means 'inner'. Therefore, the English name of this practice is 'inner silence'. In our daily life our minds are almost continually externalized. We see and hear only what is going on outside of us, and we have little understanding of the events taking place in our inner environment. The practice of antar mouna is designed to turn this around, so that for at least a short period we can see the workings of our mind and understand them. In reality, antar mouna is one of the few 'permanent sadhanas' which can be practised spontaneously twenty-four hours of the day by any aspirant who is determined to know himself. By maintaining awareness of our internal environment, thoughts, emotional reactions, and so on, we can speed up our personal evolution to the utmost degree. It will make us understand the workings of our rational and irrational mind, as well as giving us an understanding of what makes other people tick.



Antar mouna teaches us to know the processes of the mind and ways in which we can bring them under control. Antar mouna can be practised at any time by simply reflecting on the question, 'What am I thinking? What is occurring now in my mental sphere?' When practised many times daily, this witnessing process becomes an automatic continuous occurrence, showing us who we are, what we are doing here and where we are going.

### **Japa yoga**

Out of all the techniques, the technique of mantra or japa yoga is considered to be the easiest and best. Japa yoga can be practised by anyone at any time and under any conditions. The word *japa* means 'to rotate', and a *mantra* is a grouping of sound vibrations which have an effect on the mental and psychic consciousness of the individual.

Many people give up their mantra. They say, "When I do mantra, my thoughts become more wild. When I do not do mantra, my mind is tranquil. Therefore, why should I practise mantra if my mind is agitated?" Mantra is like a catalyst; it stimulates karma and explodes our impressions and suppressions. It expresses our samskaras, the seeds of existence. Just as we take a purgo-laxative, in the same way, when we take mantra, all our thoughts that are suppressed, that are repressed and buried in the mind, begin to come out. Initially, when we are practising mantra, we should not expect concentration but the process of purging. If the mind cooperates, it is well and good, but if the mind does not cooperate, we should not mind at all. It is very difficult to control the mind. Everything an individual can do, but controlling the mind is the most difficult and perhaps, the last of man's accomplishments.

### **Selfless service**

Living for others is the easiest way to evolve spiritually. I am saying this from my own experience, because I have done everything. There is practically no form of spiritual life which

I have not experienced, but my mind opened when I started living for others. As long as I was living for myself, I was blind. When I began to think about others, about those who are sick, poor and have no home, I started growing inwardly.

In the Upanishads, the concept of karma is twofold: karma done for oneself, and karma done for others. This karma does not bind a person. Karma needs to be done in such a way that it is conducive to one's happiness and benefits the larger community. This is the upanishadic approach to life. A person is never bound by the karmas that are beneficial to society. The life of a person who works for others is truly grand.

Working for others influences the karmas and health in a positive way. If there is only selfless affection, instead of selfishness, there will be no emotional disturbance and non-attachment will flourish. One is not caught in the cycle of karma whenever one serves others selflessly without any ulterior motive. Every karma, every action, has an equal and opposite reaction. Only the karma done for others has no reaction, either equal or opposite. Any karma done for oneself and one's family has an equal and opposite reaction. Any karma done for others who are total strangers has no reaction.



The human race is inherently selfish, but the rest of creation is selfless: a fruit tree gives fruit, a river gives water, a cow gives milk and her hide is used after she has died. Similarly, people need to benefit others by performing selfless work and share their wealth, knowledge and power.

One's dharma is to serve humanity and to be with those who need love. One should help those who are seeking spiritual life and those who are sick, poor and neglected. One's strength, intelligence, mind, heart, soul, money, knowledge, power, resources and friends should be used for the welfare of others. Enjoyment and happiness come from giving and sharing with people who are unhappy. This is the central teaching of Jesus Christ, Saint Francis, Gautama Buddha, Mahavira, Mahatma Gandhi, and every intelligent human being.

It is far easier and more motivating to work for others than for oneself. The mind becomes free and the heart is purified. Selfless service acts as a detergent. It washes away the dirt of karma. Selfless service is the cleanser of the mind. While doing selfless service, the mind is occupied as monotony and tension are released. A person can never acquire control of the mind until he shares the sorrow and suffering of others and considers their misery to be his own. It is not easy to conquer the mind, and a person should not fight with it, as ultimately he will be the loser. The only way to deal with the mind is to give it a proper and sound job that it likes. The mind likes to serve humanity, to help the poor, feed the hungry, nurse the sick, take care of orphans, and go from door to door finding out the problems of others and rendering whatever help is needed there.

The transformation in the mind will be seen, like carbon which becomes a diamond. One can never deal with the mind, whether one is young or old, rich or poor, capable or incapable, unless one can think and aspire passionately to help others. The mind can only be dealt with by a sattwic programming of dedication and self-sacrifice. By fighting with the mind, one creates psychological problems and becomes sick. The only way to conquer the mind is to dedicate it to the service of an ideal that will make it happy. Work done free of charge is necessary

for self-transformation, as it cleans the rajo and tamo gunas of the mind.

An aspirant is wasting time if he just grapples and wrestles with the mind twenty-four hours a day. He boxes with it, he gives it the slip; in his combat with the mind, sometimes he falls and sometimes the mind falls, but neither can attain a decisive victory. The head and the tail win equally, half and half, and the wrestling ends in quits. In the evening he is fagged out. He begins to moan with a headache and takes a tranquillizer or opens a bottle. Some people opt to visit a temple or church for respite. Some go to a discotheque to refresh themselves. Some decide on a session of yoga nidra and play a tape. Nobody thinks of going to the house of a poor man and lighting a lamp. Nobody thinks of visiting the have-nots.

Selfless service alone changes the inner programming of the mind. When you remove the pain and helplessness of other people, your own pain will be removed. If you want to befriend your mind, treat the whole world as your family and reach out to as many people as you can.

*Hari Om Tat Sat*





You take great care of the body. You desire that it should be clean, healthy, beautiful and strong. You take a bath with sweet soaps and hot water. You regularly feed the body with nourishing food. If there is pain or disease, medicine is given and a doctor is consulted, but you never give a thought to the much more important thing – the mind. Body is only the outward appearance, a projection of the mind. The mind operates through the senses and sense organs. If the mind is well, the body is well. If the mind is sick, the body becomes ill.

The mind is everything. It controls your whole life. Upon it depends your happiness or misery, success or failure. Thus the Upanishads say:

*Mana eva manushyaanaam kaaranam bandha mokshayoh.*

Mind alone is the cause of man's bondage and liberation.

*Yena manojitam jagat jitam tena.*

He who has conquered the mind has conquered the world.

Do you fully realize now the great importance of controlling, training and overcoming the mind? You have neglected the care of the mind for so long. Attend to this vital subject from today. Mastery of the mind means success in all fields of life. To achieve this mastery you must study the mind. You must understand its nature, habits, tricks and the effective methods of restraining it.

—Swami Sivananda



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